

Understanding Chemical Dependency

Chemical dependency or addiction is the overpowering physical or emotional urge to continue substance use despite adverse consequences. There is an increase in tolerance for the substance, and withdrawal symptoms sometimes occur if the substance is discontinued; substance use has become the central focus of life.

I. SUBSTANCE USE VERSUS SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The scientific and theoretical basis of models of addiction come from medicine, psychology, sociology, religious studies, and other disciplines.

Knowledge

- Understand a variety of models and theories of addiction and other problems related to substance use and substance abuse.

Skills

- Be able to use terms and concepts related to theory, research, and practice.

Attitudes

- Appreciate the complexity inherent in understanding addiction;
- Acknowledge that every addicted individual has a unique situation, history, motivation, and potential strategy for leading a safer life.

II. PHARMACOLOGY

The major psychoactive substances of abuse are:

- Stimulants
- Depressants
- Opioids

Knowledge

- Understand fundamental concepts of pharmacological properties and the effects of all psychoactive substances.

Skills

- Be able to describe the behavioral, psychological, physical, and social effects of psychoactive substances on the user and significant others.

Attitudes

- Develop an interest in scientific research findings about various classes of drugs.

III. TREATMENTS

Options for substance abuse treatment include:

- Inpatient
- Outpatient
- Outpatient Drug Free

Knowledge

- Understand the philosophy, practices, policies, and outcomes of the most generally accepted models of treatment.

Skills

- Be able to describe the philosophies, practices, policies, and outcomes of the most generally accepted and scientifically supported models of treatment, recovery, relapse prevention, and continuing care for addiction and other substance-related problems in ways the client can relate to and understand.

Attitudes

- Accept the validity of a variety of different treatment approaches and models.